

## **Jack McNeill, Clarinettist, and the Gildas String Quartet**

*Carlisle Music Society, St Cuthbert's Church, Thursday 6th October*

A large audience enjoyed a sublime concert given by Carlisle-educated Jack McNeill, now rightly recognised on an international stage - as is the impressive Gildas String Quartet.

The concert began with the evergreen and hauntingly beautiful Mozart Clarinet Quintet in A Major. It ended with the drama and passion of Brahms' Quintet in B Minor. These old masterpieces remain as fresh and appealing as ever. We were entranced by Mozart's breezy, bouncy and often dramatic work. The attractive tunes and developments highlighted Jack's purity of tone, subtlety of phrasing and confident mastery of the many challenging sections. The interplay with the playing of each of the four members of the Gildas Quartet was superb.

The Brahms Quintet swept me away in a sublime soundscape sometimes sad and serene but more often passionate and spine-tingling. You were tempted to close your eyes but better to watch the musicians putting body and soul into extracting every nuance of contrasting emotion from a wonderful score.

Mozart, Brahms - what more could you wish for? Well, perhaps David Bruce's unusual recent composition 'Gumboots'. Inspired by oppressed South African miners' lives, this piece was a revelation and merits an extended life in the world concert repertoire. I gave up on attempts to pigeon-hole this - shades of Bartok, Gershwin, Latin-American, jazz - better to conclude that Bruce has established his own unique sound and voice, which excited so many in an appreciative audience.

*Next Carlisle Music Society Concert, 27th October: Ryad Nicolas, piano, plays Beethoven and Chopin.*

Ted Cole